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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

NOTES ON THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

ALTHOUGH pragmatism has been primarily an analysis of cognition and its validation, the largest portion of the criticisms of this philosophy have been aimed at its theory of truth. Critics have most often taken the pragmatists' conception of truth to be the core of the doctrine. For example, Russell, writing in 1908, remarks that:

> . . . the cardinal point in the pragmatist philosophy, namely its theory of truth, is so new, and necessary to the rest of the philosophy . . . that its inventors cannot be regarded as merely developing the thoughts of . . . predecessors.[1]

And writing forty years later Russell again notes that:

> Pragmatism, as it appears in James, is primarily a new definition of "truth."[2] From the strictly philosophical point of view, the chief importance of Dewey's work lies in his criticism of the traditional notion of "truth" which is embodied in the theory he calls instrumentalism.[3]

Similar emphasis upon the theory of truth in pragmatism can be found in many writers.[4]

I believe that it is a mistake to construe the conception of truth as the central notion in pragmatism. It is rather their conception of knowledge which deserves that position. However, I shall not argue that point. Instead I shall consider some of the misunderstandings of the pragmatic view of truth which are in part responsible for the critics' emphasis on this subject. I shall also try to indicate what seems to me to be the chief source of these misunderstandings.

It will be convenient to limit the discussion more or less to the writings of William James. For James possesses the double advantage of having written a great deal on the explicit subject of

[1] *Philosophical Essays*, Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1910, p. 88.

[2] *A History of Western Philosophy*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1945, p. 816.

[3] Ibid., p. 820.

[4] See, for example, G. E. Moore's article on James in *Philosophical Studies;* W. P. Montague, *Ways of Knowing*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1925, pp. 147, 162–164; and J. B. Pratt, *What Is Pragmatism?* Macmillan Co., New York, 1909, especially pp. 87, 113, 116–117.

truth and of having expressed views susceptible to the kind of serious misinterpretation I wish to remove. Peirce lacks the latter advantage and Dewey the former.

In the first part of the paper I shall deal with the relation of truth to verification in James, and in the second part with the bearing of the semantic conception of truth upon James's treatment of the subject.

I

Criticisms of the pragmatic theory of truth (and, indeed, of their philosophy in general) have focused upon three assertions which have been credited to the pragmatists. They are the following:

(1) Truth is the same as verification.
(2) The true is the useful or satisfactory or successful (in beliefs).
(3) The truth or falsehood of a belief or statement is not fixed and eternal but is mutable.

But both (2) and (3) are, insofar as they are to be found in the pragmatic writings, corollaries of (1). If (1) is justifiably attributed to the pragmatist then (2) follows by a substitution of his definition of verification. And if (1) is justifiably attributed to the pragmatist then (3) follows in virtue of the mutability of the status of any belief or statement with respect to its degree of verification or falsification. The first proposition is, then, the strategic one. If it is not accepted by the pragmatist then the evidence for their acceptance of the second two becomes negligible, and much of the criticism of pragmatism is nullified.

Numerous writers have found this identification of truth and verification in pragmatism. For example, Pratt writes:

> . . . [the pragmatist] deduces the rather amazing conclusion that since its usefulness proves it true, its trueness consists in its usefulness. The test of truth and the meaning of truth are thus completely identified.[5]

And Russell argues:

> At first sight it might seem a perfectly proper inductive proceeding to inquire what properties a belief must have in order that we may call it *true*, and to infer that those properties constitute the meaning of "truth." There is, however, a fallacy in this method of inquiry; and this fallacy, in our opinion, is at the bottom of the whole pragmatic philosophy.[6]

[5] Op. cit., p. 89.
[6] *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 137–138.

Not infrequently James has written accounts of truth which seem to justify the belief that, for him, to be true is no more than to be verified. Three examples are the following:[7]

> . . . any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much. . . . [P, 58.]

> Our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural, of processes of leading, realized *in rebus*, and having only this quality in common, that they *pay*. They pay by guiding us into or towards some part of a system with which at any rate we are now in the kind of commerce vaguely designated as verification. [P, 218.]

> The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-*fication*. [P, 201.]

Assuming, then, that James is committed to the belief that the true is the same as the verified, serious difficulties are encountered, as his critics have pointed out. There are undoubtedly many statements which never have been and never will be verified or falsified, not because they cannot be but because no one has or will take the trouble to test them. Such statements are, on James's theory, neither true nor false. But this violates a basic rule of language, the law of excluded middle, which requires that every statement be either true or false. Also, since the verification-status of a statement may vary at different times—it may be verified or confirmed at one time and falsified or disconfirmed at another—a statement may be true at one time and false at another. But again this violates a fundamental rule concerning the use of the word 'true.' A statement cannot be both true and false, according to the law of contradiction. The statement 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon' cannot be true in 1500 and false in 1900. For Caesar could not have both crossed the Rubicon and not crossed it. A statement might be warranted, or reasonably well verified, in 1500 and not warranted in 1900; but warrant or credibility is quite different from truth. Truth, in short, is something which a statement either has or does not have once and for all and independently of whether or not it has been or ever will be actually confirmed or disconfirmed by any person. James may very well be explicating the notion of verification in an interesting way but his

[7] In quoting James I shall use 'P' to refer to *Pragmatism*, Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1947, and 'MT' to refer to *The Meaning of Truth*, Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1909. In all cases the italics are those of the original author.

account is obviously inadequate if taken, as he takes it, as a theory of the nature of truth.

These difficulties would be fatal, I believe, if James's theory were as it appears to be in the remarks quoted—if he did identify the true and the confirmed. However, I do not believe that his critical theory is of such a naive kind. To render this contention plausible it will be necessary both to show that he expressed some other conception of truth, and to give some explanation for this tendency to equate truth and verification.

The definition of truth to which James adheres when he is seeking formal rigor is one which identifies truth and verifi*ability*. To say that a belief is true is not to say that it is verifi*ed*—or even simply that it *will* be verified—but to say that it is verifi*able*. And "verifiable" does not here mean theoretically capable of being either verified or falsified, confirmed or disconfirmed. It means rather something like this:

p is verifiable = If p *were* carefully tested over an indefinitely long period it *would* be verified (confirmed) to an increasingly higher degree.

The truth of a belief is its disposition to be confirmed in the long run and under certain conditions, i.e., if it is carefully tested. It is a potentiality or tendency of the belief or statement to be confirmed eventually if tested; it is not a state of actual confirmation.

Some version of the verifiability view is frequently expressed by James. Thus as early as *Pragmatism* James writes:

> The quality of truth, obtaining *ante rem*, pragmatically means, then, the fact that in such a world innumerable ideas work better by indirect or possible than by their direct and actual verification. Truth *ante rem* means only verifiability. . . . [P, 220.]

And later he writes:

> *What constitutes the relation* known as truth, I now say, is just the *existence in the empirical world of this fundamentum of circumstance surrounding object and idea* and ready to be either short-circuited or traversed at full length. So long as it exists, and a satisfactory passage through it between the object and the idea is possible, that idea will both *be* true, and will *have been* true of that object, whether fully developed verification has taken place or not. [MT, 165.]

> I myself agree most cordially that for an idea to be true the object must be 'as' the idea declares it, but I explicate the 'as'-ness as meaning the idea's verifiability. . . . [MT, 170.]

Other expressions of this point of view will appear as the discussion continues.

Now this conception of truth is free from the criticisms which have been directed at his alleged identification of truth and verification. Verifiability is a property which every statement either definitely has or definitely does not have, regardless of whether it ever has been or will be actually verified. Furthermore it is a property which a statement has once and for all. It is not capable of being confirmed in the indefinitely long run in one year and incapable of such long-run confirmation in another year. The verifiability is a disposition of the statement which exists in the statement initially and permanently, even though it may never mainfest itself in any particular verification if it is never actually tested. It is a dispositional property which is such that the laws of contradiction and excluded middle are valid when it is identified with truth.

Of course the present definition has its own difficulties. The *definiens* is a counterfactual conditional and therefore poses problems in analysis. It also involves a reference to the "long run" which might be difficult to clarify. However, I am not concerned with such problems of further explication. I wish only to point out that the present conception is free from the formal difficulties which have been urged against the pragmatic theory in virtue of its alleged identification of truth and verification.

Possession of these merits by the "verifiability" definition demonstrates that it is inconsistent with the unqualified definition in terms of verification alone, which James seems also to have advanced. One naturally asks whether any motives or principles can be found in James's writings which would conspire to produce expression of two incompatible definitions of truth. If there are such they might provide clues for the solution of questions of priority. Further motives of this sort are clearly revealed in the writings of James.

The most important cause, in the opinion of this writer, for the failure of James to adhere consistently to expression of the "verifiability" definition is the fact that James was usually trying to forward three different but related projects simultaneously. And two of these projects frequently interfered with the third. The three endeavors were (a) to explain truth in terms of a certain relation of an "idea" to verification, that of ability to be verified; (b) to develop a new theory of actual verification and hence of knowledge, the "utilitarian" theory; and (c) to champion aggressively an extreme nominalism, insisting upon the analysis of concepts in terms of the concreta which alone constitute their ultimate referents. His frequent preoccupation with (b) and (c) when ostensibly doing (a) has accounted for most of his defections from expression of the verifiability theory of truth.

In considering the effects of (b) upon (a) it is important to remember that James's conception of truth contains three elements which call for analysis: the conditional form, if p *were* . . . then it *would* be . . . ; the notion of the "long run"; and the notion of verification. A complete understanding of his idea of truth could not be conveyed without explication of all of these elements. The first two pose thorny problems. But it is not surprising that they were frequently neglected and even ignored in the interest of explaining the verification component. For it was the notion of verification as satisfactory functioning or successful working which was the most distinctively novel element in the whole philosophy expounded by James. Consequently he finds it difficult to deal with a problem whose solution requires essential reference to verification without allowing the analysis of the latter to become his preponderant concern. We find, then, such remarks as this:

> Any idea that helps us to deal . . . with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations, that fits, in fact, and adapts out life to the reality's whole setting, will . . . hold true of that reality. [P, 213.]

Here no suggestion of the adequacy of mere potential confirmation and no considerations concerning the long run seem to be expressed. On the other hand when he is conscious of the need for meeting formal requirements he is able to deal with (a) and (b) at the same time:

> *'The true' is only the expedient in the way of our thinking.* . . . Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all future experience equally satisfactorily. Experience has ways of boiling over and making us correct our present formulas. [P, 232.]

It seems, however, that the third motive suggested—the strong concern for the concrete—was the most important stimulus to James's characterizations of truth in terms of actual rather than potential verification. At the first level of analysis truth is, indeed, to be conceived as a kind of dispositional property of an "idea":

> . . . a healthy man need not always be sleeping or always digesting, any more than a wealthy man need always be handling money. . . . All such qualities sink to the status of 'habits' between their times of exercise; and similarly truth becomes a habit of certain of our ideas and beliefs in their intervals of rest from their verifying activities. [P, 222.]

> . . . just as a man may be called an heir and treated as one before the executor has divided the estate, so an idea may practically be credited with truth before the verification process has been exhaustively carried out—the existence of the mass of verifying circumstances is enough. Where potentiality counts for

actuality in so many cases one does not see why it may not so count here. [MT, 164.]

But, as even these remarks suggest, a reference to a disposition or a potentiality is always incomplete for James. The disposition-term must be analyzed into the aggregate of concrete events which it denotes. Hence he continues the first remark above by pointing out that nevertheless "those activities [the concrete verifications] are the root of the whole matter, and the conditions of there being any habit to exist in the intervals." I am not here concerned with the adequacy of James's theory of the analysis of counterfactuals or disposition terms. What is relevant is simply to notice that it is on the basis of such a theory that so many of his formulations of the definition of truth are made, and that therefore these formulations should not be taken so much as evidence of his theory of truth as evidence of his nominalism.

Perhaps nothing is more emphasized in the writings of James than the axiom that a concept is merely an abstraction of a class of concrete particulars and that these particulars exhaust the concept's reference. And the rule of exposition which is derived from this axiom and equally emphasized in practice is that each abstraction, and hence each concept which one is concerned to understand, should be broken down into its concrete denota. This holds for the concept of truth as well as for any other:

> The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases, and generalizes. Truth, for him, becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working-values in experience. [P, 68.]

> The full reality of a truth for him [the pragmatist] is always some process of verification, in which the abstract property of connecting ideas with the objects truly is workingly embodied. Meanwhile it is endlessly serviceable to be able to talk of properties abstractly and apart from their working. . . . We thus form whole universes of platonic ideas *ante rem*, universes *in posse*, though none of them exists effectively except *in rebus*. . . . Countless relations obtain there which nobody experiences as obtaining. . . . In the same way countless opinions 'fit' realities, and countless truths are valid, though no thinker thinks them. . . .
>
> For the anti-pragmatist these prior timeless relations are the presupposition of the concrete ones. . . . When intellectualists do this, pragmatism charges them with inverting the real relation. Truth *in posse means* only truth in act; and he insists that these latter take precedence in order of logic as fell as in that of being. [MT, 203–206.]

Truth is, in the first analysis, a rather abstract relation between ideas or statements and facts—a relation determining potential interaction of a certain sort. But there are no abstract relations in the final analysis, holds James. And since the only concrete relation which he can find for the prototype of the abstract one in

question (the verifiability) is that of *actual* verification he reduces the verifiability to a class of concrete verifications. The result is undoubtedly an oversimplification, but it is a result of a general theory of abstractions rather than of a theory of truth. The initial concept of truth remains that of verifiability.

Finally we may note that James himself was quite conscious that his own emphasis on the concrete constituted not only the chief difference between him and the others, but also constituted a chief source of misunderstanding on the part of his critics. Referring to the "antipragmatist" in general he writes,

> His trouble seems to me mainly to arise from his fixed inability to understand how a concrete statement can possibly mean as much, or be as valuable, as an abstract one. I said above that the main quarrel between us and our critics was that of concreteness *versus* abstractness. [MT, 201.]

And contrasting his view with that of most epistemologists he says,

> . . . and the most general way of characterizing the two views is by saying that my view describes knowing as it exists concretely, while the other view only describes its results abstractly taken. [MT, 144.]

Perhaps the best example of a passage in which all three of the motives which have been suggested operate in conjunction with an awareness of the importance of his own nominalism is the following:

> Of course if you take the satisfactoriness concretely, . . . and if, by truth, you mean truth taken abstractly and verified in the long run you cannot make them equate, for it is notorious that the temporarily satisfactory is often false. Yet at each and every concrete moment, truth for each man is what that man 'trowth' at that moment with the maximum of satisfaction to himself; and similarly abstract truth, truth verified by the long run, and abstract satisfactoriness, long-run satisfactoriness, coincide. If, in short, we compare concrete with concrete and abstract with abstract, the true and satisfactory do mean the same thing. I suspect that a certain muddling hereabouts is what makes the general public so impervious to humanism's claims. [MT, 88–89.] [8]

[8] The conception of truth as potential verification in the long run seems to be what Peirce has in mind when he writes, "That is to say, I hold that truth's independence of individual opinions is due . . . to its being the predestined result to which sufficient inquiry would eventually lead" (*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Volume 5, pp. 343–344) and "The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds forever—or would do so, if study were to go on forever" (ibid., p. 395). And Dewey indicates his agreement with the conception of Peirce in his *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry*, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1938, p. 345 (footnote).

II

The criticisms which we have discussed above appear as a part of a family quarrel in comparison with the implications which have been drawn for all philosophic theories of truth as a result of the work of Tarski on truth.[9] For according to many interpreters of the "semantic conception" of truth, the pragmatic theory, along with all other philosophic theories of truth, is left in the humiliating position of a theory without a subject-matter.

I do not believe that the semantic conception of truth provides grounds for such a drastic conclusion. In fact, I should maintain that not only does the semantic conception itself suggest a subject-matter for a theory of truth but that it suggests a way of viewing the problem which is essentially the way of James and the pragmatists. Before testing this claim let us examine briefly the semantic conception and the misgivings it has aroused.

What Tarski has described as the "semantic conception of truth" is to be distinguished from the semantic definition of truth developed by him. The former is not a definition but a criterion which, according to Tarski, every adequate definition should meet. It is employed by Tarski as a test of adequacy in the construction of a formal definition of truth for a particular language. In this discussion we may ignore the definition because the difficulties for philosophic theories of truth have been suggested chiefly by the semantic conception.

The semantic criterion for a definition of truth is the following: Allow the letter '*p*' to be a substitute for some particular but unspecified sentence, and allow the letter '*X*' to be the *name* of the sentence for which the letter '*p*' stands. Then any definition of truth must be such that it implies all equivalences of the following form:

X is true if and only if *p*.

For example, it must imply the equivalence:

'Crows are black' is true if and only if crows are black.

It will be noticed that the statement which *occurs* on the right hand side of the equivalence sign does not occur on the left hand side but is named—in this case by surrounding the same words with single quotes. And the name appears as the subject of the sentence

[9] "Der Wahrheitsbegriff in den formalisierten Sprachen," in *Studia Philosophica*, Vol. I, 1935, pp. 261–405. Also "The Semantic Conception of Truth," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. IV, 1944, pp. 341–375.

which does occur on the left hand side—the sentence, ' 'Crows are black' is true'.

Such a criterion does seem to express an equivalence which is universally valid. Clearly if crows are black then the sentence 'Crows are black' is true; and it is also clear that if the sentence 'Crows are black' is true, then crows are black. In general it would seem that such a mutual implication obtains between statements of the form specified. We can agree, then, that any definition of truth should involve a *definiens* which warrants all such equivalences.

What are the misgivings to which this conception has given rise? They can best be illustrated by quoting two writers whose interpretations are quite similar. Professor Black, after summarizing Tarski's work on truth, proposed tentatively a "new philosophical theory" of truth:

> On this view, the locution "that . . . is true" would be regarded as a linguistic device for converting an unasserted into an asserted sentence. Truth would then tend to lose some of its present dignity. One might be inclined to call the word redundant, and to baptize the theory, in the customary misleading fashion, as a "No Truth" theory.[10]

However, Black is hesitant about going even that far towards a "theory" and concludes on the same page that:

> . . . any search for a direct answer to the "philosophical problem of truth" can at best produce a formula that is platitudinous and tautologous or arbitrary and paradoxical; and that a more hopeful method for investigating the "problem" is to dispel the confusions of thought which generate it.

A. J. Ayer is even more emphatic. His analysis does not seem to have been directed by Tarski's work, but the source of his conclusions is essentially the semantic conception as it is presented above. He writes:

> Reverting to the analysis of truth, we find that in all sentences of the form "p is true", the phrase "is true" is logically superfluous. When, for example, one says that the proposition "Queen Anne is dead" is true, all that one is saying is that Queen Anne is dead. . . . Thus to say that a proposition is true is just to assert it. . . . And this indicates that the terms "true" and "false" connote nothing, but function in the sentence simply as marks of assertion and denial. And in that case there can be no sense in asking us to analyse the concept of "truth".
>
> We conclude, then, that there is no problem of truth as it is ordinarily conceived. The traditional conception of truth as a "real quality" or a "real relation" is due like most philosophical mistakes to a failure to analyse sentences correctly.[11]

[10] Max Black, *Language and Philosophy*, Cornell University Press, 1949, p. 107.

[11] A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1949, pp. 88–89.

We may note that the first sentence of Ayer's remarks above is incorrect. The phrase 'is true' is certainly not superfluous in sentences of the form '*X* is true'. To say that it is is to suggest that we start with a sentence, add the words 'is true' to it, and find that no new meaning has been added. But in fact we do not add 'is true' to a sentence at all. If we did we would get an expression like 'Crows are black is true'. But this is grammatical nonsense. What we do is add the words 'is true' to a *name* of a sentence; the *name* of one sentence functions as the subject of the sentence in which the phrase 'is true' occurs. For example we write:

'Crows are black' is true.

If we removed the words 'is true' from this sentence we should have no sentence at all but merely a name standing by itself.

However, what we cannot deny is what Ayer goes on to assert and what Black suggests—that the phrase 'is true' functions merely to assert a sentence. Our qualification of Ayer's remarks in the previous paragraph indicates just that. It shows simply that there are at least two ways of asserting a sentence. On the one hand (restricting ourselves to written assertions) we may simply capitalize the first word and place a period at the end; or, on the other hand, we may take the same words and surround them with single quotation marks and add the words 'is true' and a period. Both operations achieve the same end, assertion of a given sentence. Of course the sentences may be named by some other method than the use of quotation marks, as in our analysis above where we let the letter '*X*' be the name of a sentence. Also a sentence may be asserted, as the sentence on the right hand side of the equivalence in the semantic conception is, by simply placing it properly in the context of a compound sentence. The essential point is that the semantic conception of truth puts in clear relief the fact that to say of a sentence that it is true is no more and no less than simply to assert that sentence.

The conclusion to be drawn is that a theory of truth must be in some sense a theory of assertion.

For Ayer and Black this is tantamount to saying that there is no longer any subject-matter for a theory of truth. If to predicate truth of a sentence is simply to assert the same sentence then there is no problem left for philosophical analysis.

I suggest, however, that this latter is an unwarranted addition to the justified and interesting conclusion that an analysis of truth is in some sense an analysis of the nature of assertion. Further-

more, I believe that the approach to the analysis of truth which has been advanced by the pragmatists is distinguished by an emphasis which is congruent with the implications of the semantic conception and which at least points the way towards the allaying of the misgivings which that conception has aroused.

The first point to notice is that James's conception of the nature of the inquiry into the meaning of truth is, broadly speaking, that which the semantic conception suggests—that of an inquiry into the nature of assertion. One of the salient emphases in the writings of James is on the need for conceiving the analysis of truth as an examination of the structure and workings of the *active attitude* which constitutes assertion or belief. Over and over he insists that theories of truth have too long settled for a mere reference to some sort of correspondence between the "idea" and the reality without giving any hint of the nature of this correspondence. And with equal frequency he insists that the only way that such correspondence can be dissected is by examining the nature of the *act* of *cognitive intention* which, or some ingredient in which, is said to "resemble" the reality. The analysis of truth must center on the examination of the peculiar state of mind of the asserter or believer and the effects it promises for the rest of the world. James writes:

> The trueness of an idea must mean *something definite in it that determines its tendency to work*, and indeed towards this object rather than that. . . . What that something is in the case of truth psychology tells us: the idea has associates peculiar to itself, motor as well as ideational; it tends by its place and nature to call these into being, one after another; and the appearance of them in succession is what we mean by the 'workings' of the idea. According to what they are, does the trueness or falseness which the idea harbored come to light. [MT, 174.]

> Truth meaning agreement with reality, the mode of the agreeing is a practical problem which the subjective term of the relation alone can solve. [MT, 224.]

However, merely to show that James considered the analysis of truth to center around the analysis of the cognitive act is not enough. It is necessary also to show how the particular conception of truth advocated by James—truth as verifiability—can be maintained while admitting the equivalence between assertion of a sentence and ascription of truth to a sentence. How can 'truth' mean verifiability when to predicate truth of a sentence is merely to assert that sentence? Since the problem has not been considered by James or the other pragmatists in just this form it will be necessary to suggest the lines which a defense of the pragmatic approach would take.

By way of an approach which might throw a different light on the semantic conception I propose that we reverse our orientation and—instead of looking to assertion for insight into truth—look to truth predication for insight into assertion. To assert a sentence is the same, according to the semantic conception, as to predicate truth of that sentence. This suggests then that the very act of assertion itself has the nature of a *claim*—a claim of truth. Now what could be a plausible content for this claim? James would suggest, initially, that the claim is that the sentence "agrees with the facts." But this, says James, requires further explication. What does it mean to claim that the sentence "agrees with the facts"? This means, James concludes, that one claims that the sentence would be verified in the long run if tested carefully. By asserting a sentence one claims that the sentence is verifiable. One assumes responsibility for the positive results of an indefinitely extended sequence of tests.[12]

The first difficulty which occurs to this proposal is that it seems far-fetched to suppose that when one asserts a sentence one is talking about the sentence. But this is no more implausible than the semantic conception itself. For the latter implies precisely that. According to that conception to assert a sentence is logically equivalent to saying *of* the same sentence that it is true. Insofar, then, as one assumes the semantic conception one cannot bring such an objection against the present hypothesis. However we suggest that even if the two processes are truth-functionally equivalent there may still be a difference between the *explicit* contents of each. The assertion of a sentence refers only implicitly or indirectly to the sentence asserted, while such a reference becomes explicit when one *names* the sentence and says it "is true." When one asserts a sentence one is claiming that a correlation exists between an indefinitely extended series of *operations*—testing operations—and a similar series of positive *confirming results.* A correlation, such that if the first series comes to be, the second will eventually parallel it, is claimed. Directly, then, one is speaking only of certain potential organism-environment interactions. Indirectly, however, one is also claiming that the *sentence* is verifiable. For what we *mean* by saying that the sentence is verifiable is simply that a kind of connection between certain tests and positive results exists. We assume or take for granted a connection between the sentence as a physical object and the possible testing operations which are the meaning the the sentence. Hence, if we

[12] Peirce stresses the "assumption of responsibility" in the act of assertion. See especially op. cit., p. 386.

say that a sentence is verifiable, and if the sentence is meaningful, then we can, in theory, translate our remark into one about a connection between certain operations and certain confirming results; or if we originally claim the latter connection we can translate that into a claim about the verifiability of the sentence. The difference between the mere assertion of a sentence and the assertion of another sentence which predicates truth of the first (e.g., between asserting 'Snow is white' and asserting ' 'Snow is white' is true') is the difference between speaking in the first case explicitly or directly about a correlation between tests and confirming results and only implicitly or indirectly about a sentence, and, in the second case, speaking explicitly about a sentence and only implicitly about a correlation between tests and confirming results. In both instances the explicit utterance implies the correlative implicit one in virtue of the presupposition concerning the correlation between the physical sentence itself and the testing operations —the presupposition of a connection between the sentence and its meaning.

The second and closely related objection is simply that it does not seem likely that one makes such a complex claim by merely asserting a sentence. And here it seems we have to choose between the plausibility of construing the equivalence of assertion and predication of truth as a reduction in the apparent meaning of 'true' or as an increase in the apparent significance of mere assertion. My proposal is that we at least give the latter alternative serious consideration rather than accept the former unquestioningly. I would suggest simply that since a sentence is supposed to have implications extending indefinitely into the future, and since a sentence has no implications independently of a context of assertion, or potential assertion, by someone, then the act of assertion itself must in some way have such indefinitely extended implications.[18]

[18] However, we do not wish to stretch our hypothesis too far. And it may be one of the results of such an analysis that certain attitudes for which the predicates 'true' and 'false' have generally been considered relevant are not within the scope of such predicates. Beliefs have generally been described as true or false, or as having contents which are true or false. And often included in the class of beliefs are those mechanical habits or dispositions to respond which are shared by humans with the lowest animals—adjustments to the environment which have an anticipatory character and which are modifiable through experience. But it would seem implausible indeed to suppose that such dispositions involve a claim concerning the indefinitely extended future career of a set of possible responses by many organisms. It may be necessary, then, to conclude that such dispositions or attitudes do not involve a claim of truth, thus marking off such attitudes from the peculiarly human acts of explicit assertion.

Finally we may turn to the charge by Ayer that those philosophers who have considered truth to be a "real" relation have been involved in a confusion of language. William James clearly fits into the category, for he considered truth to be such a relation. Can James maintain plausibly that to say of something that it is true is to say of it that it has a certain relation to something else? According to our interpretation of pragmatism such language would seem to be meaningful and consistent. To say of a sentence that it is true is to say that it is verifiable. This in turn is to say that if the sentence were tested over an indefinitely long run it would be increasingly confirmed. And this is to say, first, that the sentence is related to certain possible operations and expectancies of results in the way we designate by saying the latter are the meaning of the former, and, second, that the possible operations are related to the expected results by a kind of correlation which will manifest itself fairly consistently over a long run.

But since assertion of a sentence is itself equivalent to ascribing truth to the sentence it must be legitimate to say that in the act of assertion itself a similar relation is claimed to exist. But, as we have seen, the act of assertion itself does not explicitly claim exactly the same relation as does the predication of truth. For it does not *explicitly* say anything about the sentence which it asserts. However it does claim a relation—namely that relation of correlation between the testing responses and confirming results which has been mentioned earlier. And it is presupposed that the sentence which is asserted has its meaning in these testing responses. Therefore the mere assertion of the sentence implicitly claims the same relation between the sentence and the series of test-confirmation pairs as the explicit ascription of truth to the sentence claims.

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MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND META-ETHICS[1]

IT is the object of this paper to point to a certain lack of clarity inherent in the current conception of moral philosophy as a field of conflict for rival meta-ethical theories. I shall argue first that the distinction between "normative" and "meta-ethical" theories is not at all clear, that by common-sense standards contemporary theories *are* normative (specifically, moral) in char-

[1] This paper has been read by Sidney Morgenbesser and Arthur Diener, both of whom have given me helpful suggestions.

acter, and that a more rigorous distinction is apt to involve circularity. In the second place I shall argue that even if it were possible to make this distinction clear, the assumption that contemporary theories are "rival" theories, in the sense of being logical contraries, is unwarranted. Finally I shall argue that if these theories are genuinely incompatible, then any decision for one against the others would require the resolution of some fundamental problems of metaphysics and epistemology.

The assumptions which I wish to examine, viz., that contemporary theories are (a) meta-ethical and (b) mutually exclusive, are rarely made explicit and can hardly be regarded as a part of any theory. They appear usually in the context of programmatic discussion where it is a question of organizing or directing analytic inquiry in moral philosophy. For the purposes of discussion I shall refer to an article by Professor Frankena [2] in which he attempts a general survey of contemporary ethical theories and proposes some new avenues of research. In so doing he makes use of both the suppositions which are here in question.

According to this author there are three contemporary "schemes of morality": naturalism, intuitionism, and noncognitivism. All of these are said to be "meta-ethical in character" and "their proponents might quite possibly maintain the same opinions as to what is right or good in normative ethics." [3] Mr. Frankena holds that "these are the theories competing in the lists of moral philosophy today" and he believes that "the options between them must be taken seriously." None of them, he thinks, has been "finally discredited" and the task for moral philosophers is to discover some more decisive means for deciding which is correct, or, as he sometimes says, most "adequate."

The distinction between "normative" and "meta-ethical" theories is expressed as follows:

> . . . it will be convenient to divide ethics into two parts: (1) ethical theory or metaethics, which asks such questions as what is the meaning of the terms "right," "good," etc., and consists not of ethical judgments proper, but of such logical, epistemological, or ontological statements as "Good means desired," "Right stands for a nonnatural property," "Ought implies can"; (2) normative ethics, which asks what things or actions are good, right, etc., and consists of ethical judgments (i.e., judgments of value and of obligation) proper.[4]

[2] William K. Frankena, "Moral Philosophy at Mid-Century," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LX (1951), pp. 44–55.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

1. My first point is this: if we accept Mr. Frankena's distinction to the extent of admitting that "Right stands for a nonnatural property" is not normative *in the same sense* that "Murder is wrong," for example, is normative, than we shall have to reject his contention that the theories which he mentions are meta-ethical in character. All of them, it is true, contain *some* meta-ethical sentences, i.e., "logical, epistemological, or ontological statements," but all of them contain in addition some normative statements, i.e., "ethical judgments proper." Each of them, in other words, contains what non-philosophers would regard as a "moral message." The intuitionists, for example, tell us not only that goodness is a simple nonnatural quality but also what things, in fact, *are good*, viz., "states of mind to the extent in which they are characterized by moral virtue, intelligence and pleasure."[5] And one of the leading exponents of naturalism concludes his book with a chapter on the "highest good." Nor is this "mere" linguistic analysis. On the contrary it is a serious plea for the recognition that what is supremely valuable is what "satisfies all individuals, when individuals are both personally integrated and harmoniously associated."[6] The noncognitivists who insist that their theory is not, in Mr. Frankena's sense, "normative," are none the less much given to editorial moralizing. They remind us that their doctrine "does not confine one . . . to a passive or cynical neutrality" and that "ideals" must be fought for with the words "right" and "wrong" and supported with "clear-minded reasons."[7] Such recommendations are supposed, of course, to be explicative comments, and not a part of the theory itself, which consists in an account of emotive meaning, persuasive definitions, and so forth. Is this supposition defensible? *Prima facie*, it seems not, since noncognitivists admit that their theory, if taken "out of context" would "urge a docile omnitolerance."[8] But what is it that the "context" supplies? It is recommendations of the sort noted above, which in ordinary language would certainly be regarded as normative.[9] It

[5] W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930, p. 122.

[6] R. B. Perry, *General Theory of Value*, New York, Longmans, Green, 1926, p. 686.

[7] C. L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1944, p. 122.

[8] Stevenson, *ibid.*, p. 107.

[9] This question is rather complex. Stevenson believes that definitions such as " 'This is good' means 'I approve of this; do so as well' " are *ordinarily* persuasive (Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 104), but that they can be "neutralized." The question is whether the process of "neutralization" requires the use of normative statements or not and this could not be decided without something more precise than Mr. Frankena's definition of "normative."

might plausibly be argued that noncognitivism, in its normative aspect, engages in what Stevenson calls "moralizing about the ways of moralists." If this is true then each of the three theories, in its own way, is addressed to the task of moral improvement and none of them is "meta-ethical" in any way which would differentiate it sharply from traditional ethics.

It is interesting in this connection to note that while naturalists, intuitionists, and noncognitivists are disposed to disclaim, for their own theories, any direct concern with normative problems, they are often unwilling to admit that opposing views are similarly "meta-ethical." Indeed one of the conventional gambits of ethical debate consists in arguing, first, that your opponent's theory is a normative doctrine *in disguise,* and, second, that as such it is expressive of some special class-interest or that it has disastrous moral consequences. Thus the naturalists argue that intuitionism reinforces moral conservatism by hypostasizing traditional values, intuitionists discern in naturalism the stigmata of industrial capitalism, and both join forces to charge that noncognitivism sanctions a vicious tolerance and fosters moral chaos.

Such objections can hardly be discussed in the abstract but it may be noted that none of the theories, taken at its face value, impresses one as sinister in intent or subversive of moral standards. Quite the contrary, in fact; all three theories manifest a concern for the propagation of certain ideals which are well-established in the tradition of western ethics. All are broadly humanistic in temper, liberal in sympathy, and committed to the view that man is capable of solving his moral and social problems without supernatural aid. Explicitly or by implication, they recommend that we should be rational and undogmatic, serious in the cultivation of personal virtue yet aware of social responsibilities, sensitive to individual differences of moral belief yet not given over to ethical skepticism. There are, to be sure, differences of emphasis. Naturalists remind us that only those who are well informed are capable of intelligent moral decisions; intuitionists commend the unique authority of the moral sense; noncognitivists warn us against the multiple ambiguities of persuasive language. Yet none of these doctrines could be called revolutionary or iconoclastic; none aspires to moral fervor; they are the spiritual descendants not of Hobbes or of Nietzsche but rather of Henry Sidgwick.

Mr. Frankena laments "the tendency of recent moral philosophers to avoid assuming the normative task of guiding human action."[10] This complaint may be justified but it cannot be sup-

[10] Frankena, *loc. cit.*, p. 54.

ported by the claim that contemporary theories are "meta-ethical in character." It might, however, be argued with some force that while these theories have not "avoided the normative task of guiding human action" they have not carried out the task very successfully and that their significant failure springs from the tendency to deal with normative problems in an unimaginative and academic manner.

It might be objected that throughout the foregoing discussion we have assumed that Mr. Frankena's contention that contemporary theories are meta-ethical was intended as a synthetic judgment while, in fact, it is merely analytic. Let us consider this possibility. On the supposition that the statement is analytic we would understand the terms "naturalism," "noncognitivism," and "intuitionism" as denoting whatever elements in the three theories are genuinely meta-ethical. But how shall we proceed to make such a discrimination? It happens that one of the major points at issue among the three theories is the basis and character of the normative-nonnormative distinction. According to the noncognitivist, a normative sentence is one which contains strongly emotive terms such as "good" or "right" or which is an instance of "persuasive definition" and is employed in an effort to "redirect attitudes" as distinct from beliefs. According to the naturalist, a normative sentence is one which "lays down a condition to be conformed to in definite terms of future action" and which is "grounded in empirically ascertained and tested relations."[11] According to the intuitionists, a normative sentence is one which ascribes to states of mind or actions, respectively, the intrinsic and indefinable characteristics of goodness and rightness.[12]

This question, "What is a normative sentence?," is one on which the theories disagree. Mr. Frankena's proposed distinction between normative and meta-ethical theories begs this question inasmuch as statements about the "meaning of the terms 'right', 'good', etc.," which he classifies as meta-ethical, would be classified by at least one of the theories, namely the noncognitivist, as normative. It would be possible, of course, to propose a *fourth* definition of "normative" and to use this as a basis for classification. Such a definition, however, would have to be made explicit and its claim to acceptance would have to be defended. We may conclude that if the assertion that contemporary theories are meta-ethical is synthetic then it is false. If, on the other hand, it is analytic then it is circular with respect to the theories for which it is supposed to legislate.

[11] John Dewey, "Theory of Valuation," *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. II, No. 4, University of Chicago Press, 1939, p. 21.

[12] W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1939, p. 21.

2. Let us assume counterfactually that a fourth definition of "normative" has been generally accepted and that by using this definition we can isolate and compare the meta-ethical ingredients of naturalism, intuitionism, and noncognitivism. Would we then be required to recognize the truth of Mr. Frankena's contention that these are "rival" theories? Let us consider the schematic classification which he provides:

> (1) Ethical sentences are cognitive and true or false.
> (2) Ethical terms do not name any unique or simple nonnatural characteristics.
> (3) Ethical sentences are nondescriptive.
> Naturalism affirms (1) and (2) and denies (3). Intuitionism affirms (1) and (3) and denies (2). Noncognitivism affirms (2) and (3), denying (1).[13]

It is difficult to evaluate this schema, since the meta-ethical statements which serve as a basis for classification are not at all clear. *Prima facie,* they do not appear to be independent. If the term "nondescriptive" as it occurs in statement (3) is taken to mean "noncognitive," then statement (3) is a logical contrary of statement (1), in which case intuitionism would be self-contradictory. If, on the other hand, "nondescriptive" is taken to mean "nonempirical," then statement (3) is a logical contrary of (2), in which case noncognitivism is self-contradictory. This and similar difficulties could perhaps be removed in a more precise formulation. Mr. Frankena admits that he intends only a "rough indication" of the relation of the three theories and remarks that statement (3) does not, in fact, render the noncognitivist position adequately. As it stands, however, the basis of classification is unclear, and because of this lack of clarity we are not able to determine whether the three theories are supposed to be mutually exclusive or whether they are intended to be a complete set. If they are not exclusive then it would be misleading to refer to them as "rival theories"; if they are not exhaustive then there is the possibility (which Mr. Frankena does not discuss) that all of them are false. While these questions cannot be decided at present, there is some reason to think that the three theories are *not* mutually exclusive and there is no reason to believe that they are exhaustive. Mr. Frankena himself points out that many possible areas of mutual agreement have not been recognized and seems further to suggest the difficulty of finding *any* point of unequivocal disagreement. Other critics have proposed the view that naturalism is

[13] Frankena, *loc. cit.*, p. 45.

compatible with noncognitivism,[14] and the latter, it has been suggested, is not theoretically inconsistent with intuitionism.[15]

Moreover, even if the three theories could be shown to be exclusive we should have no grounds to suppose that they were exhaustive. Even for Mr. Frankena's simplified model there are more than three possibilities, and in general it seems absurd to suppose that there is a finite set of possible ethical theories and that these have already been formulated.[16]

3. Let us make a further assumption, viz., that contemporary ethical theories *can* be shown to be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Would it then be profitable to pursue the question which of them is true? There is reason to think that it would not. The difficulty here concerns the test conditions for an ethical theory. Mr. Frankena remarks that "some of us do believe that one of the three theories is true and that the others have been refuted."[17] Yet none of them, he adds, can be said to have been "finally discredited." Here Mr. Frankena is taking a stand on a debatable question, and may be supposed to have in mind some notion of what would or would not qualify as a "definitive refutation" for an ethical theory. He disagrees with those who hold that one or more of the theories has already been refuted. How could such disagreement be resolved? As long as we lack an answer to this question, the "lists of moral philosophy" must seem as confusing as the croquet-game in *Alice in Wonderland* where no one is sure what the goal is and every player has his own set of rules.

Mr. Frankena thinks that in order to meet this difficulty we must examine the methodological commitments of each of the theories.

There have been in fact several conceptions of analysis, usually implicit, in recent ethical controversy; this itself is one of the reasons why no school can be said to have refuted the others. But in that case we must come to an

[14] Cf. Sidney Hook, "Dewey's Ethical Theory," in *John Dewey, Philosopher of Science and Freedom; a Symposium*, ed. by Sidney Hook, New York, Dial Press, 1950, p. 194.

[15] Cf. Stevenson, *op cit.*, p. 108.

[16] Formally, such a condition might be met if every ethical theory consisted, as Mr. Frankena's classification suggests, in a clearcut affirmation or denial of a few unambiguous meta-ethical statements. Ethical theories could then be treated like chemical compounds. But such a supposition is surely very artificial and may be compared to the 17th-century assumption that the possible forms of political constitution are exhausted by monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Cf. Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza*, Penguin Books Ltd., 1951, p. 191.

[17] Frankena, *loc. cit.*, p. 46.

agreement as to what it is that analysis is to do in or to ethics before we can hope to settle our differences.[18]

But *can* we come to such an agreement? Mr. Frankena does not hold out much hope. He believes that it is likely that examination of the "various conceptions of analysis" will "reveal the ways in which our ethical theories reflect our ultimate attitudes toward or beliefs about life and the universe, showing us the framework (speculative philosophy?) within which our analyses are made." These, he concludes, may then "be debated by whatever methods are rational and appropriate." [19]

If Mr. Frankena's conjecture is correct, as seems probable,[20] then we may come to agree that the significant disagreement among ethical theorists is a function of their basic metaphysical differences. Such differences may be, in theory, resolvable, but at the moment they are far from being settled. Indeed it seems that disagreement on basic philosophical issues is no less serious than that which occurs in the domain of ethical theory. Hence, while it might be advisable, for other reasons, to specify ethical theories with respect to their epistemological or metaphysical bases, it is unlikely that such a procedure would afford the means of determining which of these theories is true.

In conclusion it is proposed that the whole conception of ethics as a field for disputation about the truth or falsity of meta-ethical theories is misleading and obstructive. It suggests that the relevant issues are not normative ones, that they are well defined, and that they are squarely met by opposing points of view. But this is not the case. All three theories appear to be in part normative (specifically, moral) in intention and in fact. And though we may be able in a rough way to isolate their meta-ethical content we are so far from clear understanding that we cannot even be sure that on this level they are incompatible. It may be useful for pedagogical purposes to classify existing ethical theories according to type and to draw general comparisons. But such a procedure is not very promising when viewed as a basis for further investigation. It seems less likely to yield new and interesting results than to perpetuate a species of formal controversy which has not been found productive in the past.

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[20] John Dewey makes a similar point when he remarks: ". . . it is not easy to find a starting point which is not compromised in advance. For what seems on the surface to be a proper starting point may in fact be simply the conclusion of some prior epistemological or metaphysical theory." Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

BOOK REVIEW

The Interpretation of Plato's Republic. N. R. MURPHY. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press. 1951. vi, 246 p. $3.50.

So many philosophers sharpen their own axes on Plato's *Republic* that it is welcome to find Mr. Murphy only wants to chop away their irrelevancies and "get the interpretation of the *Republic* on . . . the right lines." He is "entirely concerned with the question of 'what Plato said', as contrasted with what he is sometimes supposed to have said," and views his interpretation primarily as "a mere paraphrase or precis." Yet he frequently seems to feel that Plato himself, as well as his interpreters, needs straightening out. In each chapter he selects and examines a topic from the *Republic*, and when his examination is frustrated by some change of direction in Plato's argument, he complains that "the rather artificial plan on which the *Republic* is constructed . . . prevents Plato from giving a connected exposition of such topics in any particular passage."

The "plan" of the *Republic* is indeed not that of a "connected exposition" of topics. Its continuity is the result of Plato's working out the various implications of its fundamental analogy between the individual and the state. In this review I shall attempt to indicate some of the ways in which Mr. Murphy's chopping up the *Republic* into topics is a failure to display its continuity that is due to his neglect of the pervasive influence of this analogy on the course of Plato's argument. This analogy itself Mr. Murphy characteristically reserves as a topic for a separate chapter ("The Political Analogies"), where he claims that it "has in the end no further effect on Plato's argument than to draw attention by way of simile or illustration, to the moral standards and values of personal life, which could have been defended on their own merits and without the use of analogical arguments." Not only does Mr. Murphy thus assume that Plato's argument does not depend for its cogency on the political analogies, but he further assumes somewhat condescendingly that Plato only resorts to analogies because he "is writing before the literature of philosophy had settled down and matured into the form of direct logical statement."

In order to test the effect of Mr. Murphy's assumptions on his interpretation of the *Republic* (which, if we accept his interpretation, is mistitled), let us consider first the formulation of Plato's main argument—that the just life is the happy life. The "moral standard" that Plato adduces in defining justice as a doing of one's due, is that each of an individual's three psychological tendencies —desire, aggressive impulse, reason—can be so adjusted as to make

a distinctive contribution to his happiness. Mr. Murphy would concede that our attention is more vividly drawn to these contributions when the individual soul as a whole and its three component tendencies are analogized to the constitution of a state and the functions of its classes. But as a matter of fact Plato does not consider his use of this analogy merely illustrative; the cogency of his main argument depends so inextricably on this analogy that it cannot be weakened, as it is by Mr. Murphy, into a simile. If it could, Plato should have been tempted to reformulate this argument in non-political terms at that juncture where he is prepared to admit that the just man is not necessarily able to contribute to the political life of any state that actually exists, for nothing could be more vividly solicitous of our attention than the predicament of moral man in immoral society. But it is only the interlocutor who temporarily succumbs to this temptation; Socrates himself still obstinately continues to formulate the moral argument politically—by reference to the ideal state of which the just man is a member:

> "Then, if that (the preservation of the established disposition of his soul) is his chief concern, he will not want to take part in politics."
>
> "Indeed he certainly will, in the politics of his own state, though not perhaps in those of his country."
>
> "I understand," he said, "you mean the state we have been founding in words, for I think it nowhere exists on earth." [592 a.]

Let us now consider some of the details of this main argument which no longer fit together if we accept the results of Mr. Murphy's effort to "get the interpretation of the *Republic* on . . . the right lines." That his effort dislocates its continuity is betrayed by his fondness for dismissing much of its materials as digressions and relegating them to appendices. Thus Mr. Murphy spends a chapter ("Opinion and Knowledge") on Plato's epistemological unraveling of the third of the paradoxes—that philosophers should be kings—but he dismisses the previous paradoxes as merely a political "digression," without even any analogical pertinence:

> There are cases where the political study is pursued beyond what the analogy requires, for example in the investigation of marriage and the education of women in Book V. That is a political or social problem and has no obvious analogy in the relation between the parts of the soul. [P. 76.]

But this investigation has obviously the same analogical pertinence as the unraveling of the third paradox. The regulative and educative role that has been assigned the philosopher class in the state is analogically related to the function of reason in the soul of the individual, but the paradoxical consequences of defining justice by relying on this analogy would not have been completely brought out, if Plato had not explored the analogical political implications of the rational regulation and education of the other tendencies

of the soul. Thus the rational regulation of desire poses analogically the problem of the institution of marriage and the place of women in the state; the rational regulation of the soul's aggressive tendency poses analogically the problems of regulating the usages of war and of military education—investigations to which Mr. Murphy does not refer. Plato's entire discussion in this fifth book of the points where his reliance upon the analogy has involved his main argument in political *para-doxes*—i.e., where his argument has run counter to the common opinion of the multitude—must be retained if the continuity of this argument is to be maintained. For this discussion follows upon that phase of the argument (at the end of the fourth book) where the definition of justice has provisionally been found in conformity with the common opinions that had been expressed in the first book; it leads up to the epistemological distinction, upon which Mr. Murphy dwells, between knowledge and opinion, but which is introduced because the intervening discussion has pointed up its political indispensability.

Mr. Murphy also misses the far-reaching analogical pertinence of the political conflict here between the philosophical few who have rational knowledge and the multiude who are the vehicle of opinion. When much later (in the ninth book) the question has been settled that the just life is the best life, the ensuing arguments that the best life is the pleasantest life are dismissed by Mr. Murphy:

> Whatever we think of the merits of the two arguments that follow, they are definitely an appendix (as is also the examination of further rewards in a future life announced in Book X) and are not regarded by Plato as a necessary part of his main argument. [P. 60.]

But at the same time Mr. Murphy has noticed that the character of the best life itself has not been fully clarified, because Plato "refuses to discuss the notion of good fully in the Republic, [though] he has not made it so clear to his readers that the account of justice therefore also remains incomplete." Now whatever the difficulties Plato concedes the philosopher may encounter in defining the good, he does at least indicate (505 b) that it is pleasure in the opinion of the multitude—those whose lives are spent multiplying and attempting to satisfy the claims of their desires. However inadequate rationally their definition, it is just as relevant to Plato's main argument to test his elucidation of the best life against their opinion of what the good is, as it was to test his elucidation of justice against common opinion. Neither the composition of the best life nor the character of justice—as the rational adjustment of the conflicting claims of the different psychological tendencies—can be completely examined without some reference to all these claims, any more than the ideal state can be composed exclusively of philosophers. When the force of the political analogy is felt here, "the

hedonism latent in this section of the *Republic*," which Mr. Murphy would relegate to an appendix as "alien . . . to the work as a whole," is recognized to be a phase of the argument that is as indispensable to the *Republic* as the presence of a multiude.

Mr. Murphy also relegates to an appendix "the examination of further rewards in a future life announced in Book X." But before I consider the place of this examination, I should like to generalize from his previous interpretations and to notice his central criticism of the *Republic*. His emphasis upon the third paradox regarding the political role of philosophers, upon the epistemological distinction of knowledge from common opinion, upon the failure of the *Republic* to provide a definition of the Good rather than upon its concessions to pleasure, suggests that his neglect of the fundamental analogy may have led him to neglect as well the requirements imposed on the argument by the presence in the soul of the lower psychological tendencies, which are analogically related to the lower classes in the state, and to concentrate his interpretation upon the high points of Plato's argument, where the function of reason is explored. This emphasis and this neglect are both consonant with Mr. Murphy's disposition to iron out the kinks in Plato's argument by recasting "what Plato said" into "the form of direct logical statement." For he is assuming that Plato's argument should be logical, the exhibition of the autonomous operation of reason, rather than of its influence upon the functioning of other psychological tendencies. But the philosopher in the *Republic* does in fact return to his fellow-prisoners in the cave, and his return affects his eyesight as well as theirs.

None the less, Mr. Murphy's central criticism of the *Republic* is its exclusively rationalistic emphasis—a criticism which would be more effective if he had not himself isolated and emphasized the more rationalistic phases of the argument. Mr. Murphy brings this criticism particularly to bear on Plato's treatment of art in terms of its rivalry with philosophy and his resulting exclusion of poets from the ideal state. Mr. Murphy complains that "from Book V onwards other ideals and ambitions are treated as rivals of philosophy, and from that point of view Plato does not try to make them as rational as possible or study them at their highest levels, but to represent them by a kind of special pleading in their least attractive aspects in order to prevent them appearing as serious alternatives for an intelligent man." Whatever else can be said in criticism of Plato's representation of poetry, it is not special pleading, but integral to the definition of justice which he had already achieved in Book IV by reference to the conflicting tendencies of the soul in their relationship to class-conflicts in the state. Their conflicts were the ground for distinguishing these different tendencies (436), were described as injustice (444 b), and

showed the need for their rational adjustment—the need for justice and the need for reason to secure justice. Like the political conflict between the philosophical few and the multitude, the political rivalry between philosophers and poets is exhibited by Plato in its analogical development from these psychological conflicts. In consequence of Plato's reliance upon the political analogy, all these conflicts come to be viewed as constitutional conflicts, and the selection of the title *Politeia* is vindicated. It is thus as the founders of constitutions in men's souls that poets come into conflict with philosophers:

> We shall be justified in not admitting the poet into a well constituted state, because he stimulates and strengthens a part of the soul which threatens to subvert the reason. Just as a state may be given over into the power of its worst citizens (i.e., the multiude) while the better sort are undermined, so . . . the dramatic poet sets up a vicious form of constitution in the individual soul. [605 b.]

But because Plato is defining justice by constructing "a state in words," because justice is by definition that adjustment of the soul and state which removes conflict, because the process of definition does not take the "form of direct logical statement" but is itself that adjustment of the meanings of "words" which removes their conflicting psychological and political implications, he not only anticipates the philosopher's reconciliation with the multitude (499 e), but also underscores the fact that the political exile of the poets is provisional. And just as he makes carefully adjusted concessions to pleasure, which the multitude pursues, so he makes carefully adjusted concessions to the pleasure of poetry:

> Nevertheless let it be declared that, if the dramatic poetry whose end is to give pleasure can show good reason why it should exist in a well constituted state, we would gladly admit her, since we are ourselves very conscious of her charm. . . . Then may she not justly return from this exile after she has pleaded her defence . . .? And I suppose we should allow her champions who are not poets but lovers of poetry to plead for her in prose that she is not merely a source of pleasure but beneficial to constitutional government and to human life. [607 c.]

Is not poetry working her return passage in the myth of the tenth book—the examination of future rewards that Mr. Murphy has dismissed as an "appendix" which is "not regarded by Plato as a necessary part of his main argument"? Is not this refurbishing by Plato of poetic myths a specimen, by implication, of the kind of poetry which can rehabilitate itself, even in prose, in the ideal state? If this is the case, this concluding portion of the tenth book cannot be lopped off from the rest of the *Republic* without damage to its argument.

Here Plato is himself the poetic founder of a constitution in men's souls as well as the third book's philosophic censor of poetic

myths. But if Mr. Murphy attributes Plato's censorious depreciation of artistic activity to excessive rationalism, he is just as ready to disparage Plato's own artistry as having little rational content. Thus he discounts features of the allegory of the cave as merely "pictorial detail," because Plato offers in the ensuing discussion no rational explanation of their meaning. A comment more obviously devastating in its repercussions occurs when Mr. Murphy unsuccessfully attempts, on Plato's behalf, to construct a divided line for the practical sciences that will parallel the divided line of the mathematical sciences, for he here assumes as a matter of course that "the use of visible images . . . does not belong to ethics at any stage." But is the *Republic* not an ethics? Does Plato in the *Republic* not use visible images? Is not vision in the light of the sun a visible image for vision illuminated by the Good, and does not this ethical vision supply the context into which the visible image of a divided line is introduced, assigning visible images to a stage in the attainment of this ethical vision and setting the problem itself which Mr. Murphy is attempting to elucidate?

If Plato felt himself capable of founding in his soul a *Republic* "in words" in which poetry and philosophy are reconciled, his images and analogies are not mere extraneous "pictorial detail," which he has borrowed from poetry because (as was conceded in the last citation) he was "very conscious of her charm," and which he has embroidered on an otherwise logical argument. For the poetry that returns from exile to be readmitted to the *Republic* is "not merely a source of pleasure." Plato's analogies knit together a *Republic* which would otherwise be rent by conflict between the philosopher and the poet and which falls to pieces as soon as its argument is recast in "the form of direct logical statement." Mr. Murphy's interpretation picks up these pieces. There are, of course, digressions in the *Republic* for which Plato's use of analogies is responsible, but the argument never recovers its original shape after one of these digressions. They therefore cannot be excised and the somewhat more straightforward remainder of the argument successfully retrieved and paraphrased as a discussion of topics.

The overly abbreviated interpretations I have been opposing to Mr. Murphy's involve a too mechanical use of the political analogy, and I do not intend them to compose more than the general suggestion that a more promising effort "to get the interpretation of the *Republic* on . . . the right lines" might initially assume, as a working hypothesis, that the lines laid down by Plato are those which can be traced throughout the entire dialogue, and that "what Plato said" he meant to be said where he said it in the dialogue, and not to be displaced as a digression or afterthought to an appendix.

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